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Castro Death-Plot Data Released by McGovern

By PHIL GAILEY
Inquirer Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON—Sen. George McGovern made public yesterday "documentation" given him by Cuban Premier Fidel Castro on 24 alleged attempts by the CIA to assassinate Castro and members of his government since 1960.

McGovern told a news conference that he would give the material, including photographs of captured members of some of the alleged as-

sassination teams, to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which is investigating the CIA.

The 86-page document, which McGovern says is based on the supposed confessions of captured assassins and "circumstantial evidence," claims that the latest attempt on Castro's life was made in 1971.

"I have no way to verify these allegations," McGovern said, "but if they are true, the CIA has engaged in the most shocking, murderous, and un-American behavior against the leaders of a neighborhood state. I find such behavior a complete contradiction of the principles on which our nation was founded."

The senator said that the Castro material contained "no suggestion that the CIA was acting on higher authority" in planning the assassination plots.

Among the weapons shown in the photographs were small handguns, high-powered rifles with telescopic sights, machine guns, and grenades, grenade launchers, TNT, plastic explosives, bazookas and mortars.

The material shows that before the 1971 attempt, at least one attempt to kill Castro and other Cuban leaders was made every year from 1960 to 1967, McGovern said.

McGovern noted that the stated U. S. policy toward Cuba after the 1962 missile crisis was to discourage and prevent U. S.-based groups from waging a violent campaign against the Castro regime.

"We are forced to consider the possibility that those declarations masked the exact opposite," he said. "At some time we must also consider the appalling prospect that the CIA was involved in assassination attempts in Cuba entirely on its own, and perhaps in direct defiance of higher authority."

Anti-Castro Groups

McGovern, who visited Cuba in May, said the material he received indicated the CIA worked through a wide variety of anti-Castro groups both inside Cuba and in other countries, including the United States.

In a related development, Robert Maheu, a former aide to Howard Hughes and a one-time FBI agent, said he had recruited two underworld figures to help poison Castro as the behest of the CIA.

Maheu, who spoke to reporters after testifying before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said one of the mobsters, Sam Giancana, who was killed in Chicago last month, had managed to plant an agent close to Castro prior to the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961.

After the Bay of Pigs, Maheu said, he was told that the agent "could have administered the poison" to Castro, "but the 'go' signal had not been received."

Contacts in Cuba

Maheu said he recruited Giancana and John Roselli, allegedly the mobster's West Coast lieutenant, because they had contacts in Cuba.

Maheu claimed yesterday that Giancana and Roselli had "agreed to join because they truly thought that the mission would contribute to the national security of this country."

Maheu said he contacted Roselli in 1960, when James O'Connell, his immediate superior at the CIA, suggested that Roselli could be of help in planning Castro's assassination.

Sometime later — Maheu said he did not remember exactly when — he met with Giancana and Roselli in Miami and details of the assassination plot were discussed.

McGovern, in describing the Castro material on the 1971 incident, said a would-be killer posing as a Venezuelan newsman was to shoot the Cuban leader with a gun hidden in a television camera during Castro's visit to Chile.

The assassin, Jesus Dominguez Benitz, known as "The Islander," had been arrested by the FBI in 1968 for "promoting terrorism" in the United States, the South Dakota Democrat said.

"He was arrested again in 1970 by authorities at Guantanamo Naval Base, but was nonetheless free to participate just months later in an attempt on Castro's life," McGovern said.

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